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No. 15

THE THREE DAYS' TOURNAMENT

(Appendix to No. 12, 'The Legend of Sir Lancelot du Lac')

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THE
Three Days' Tournament

A Study in Romance and Folk-Lore

Being an Appendix to the Author's 'Legend of Sir Lancelot'

By

Jessie L. Weston

AUTHOR OF 'THE LEGEND OF SIR GAWAIN'

ETC., ETC.



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P R E F A C E

THE Study comprised in the following pages should, as the title indicates, be regarded as an Appendix to the Studies on the Lancelot Legend previously published in the Grimm Library Series. As will be seen, they not only deal with an adventure ascribed to that hero, but also provide additional arguments in support of the theory of romantic evolution there set forth. Should the earlier volume ever attain to the honour of a second edition, it will probably be found well to include this Study in the form of an additional chapter ; but serious students of Arthurian romance are unfortunately not so large a body that the speedy exhaustion of an edition of any work dealing with the subject can be looked for, and, therefore, as the facts elucidated in the following pages are of considerable interest and importance to all concerned in the difficult task of investigating the sources of the Arthurian legend, it has been thought well to publish them without delay in their present form.

In the course of this Study I have, as opportunity afforded, expressed opinions on certain points upon which Arthurian scholars are at issue. Here in these few introductory words I should like, if possible, to

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make clear my own position with regard to the question of Arthurian criticism as a whole. I shall probably be deemed presumptuous when I say that, so far, I very much doubt whether we have any one clearly ascertained and established fact that will serve as a definite and solid basis for the construction of a working hypothesis as to the origin and development of this immense body of romance. We all of us have taken, and are taking, far too much for granted. We have but very few thoroughly reliable critical editions, based upon a comparative study of all the extant manuscripts. Failing a more general existence of such critical editions, it appears impossible to hope with any prospect of success to 'place' the various romances.¹

Further, it may be doubted if the true conditions of the problem, or problems, involved have even yet been adequately realised. The Arthurian cycle is not based, as is the Charlemagne cycle, upon a solid substratum of fact, which though modified for literary purposes is yet more or less capable of identification and rectification; such basis of historic fact as exists is extremely small, and for critical purposes may practically be restricted to certain definite borrowings from the early chronicles.

The great body of Arthurian romance took shape and form in the minds of a people reminiscent of past,

¹ Professor Foerster's edition of the poems of Chrétien de Troyes are probably the most satisfactory critical texts we at present possess, but the value of these is greatly impaired by the controversial use made of the prefaces attached to them.

hopeful of future, glory, who interwove with their dreams of the past, and their hopes for the future, the current beliefs of the present. To thoroughly understand, and to be able intelligently and helpfully to criticise the Arthurian Legend, it is essential that we do not allow ourselves to be led astray by what we may call the 'accidents' of the problem—the moulding into literary shape under French influence—but rather fix our attention upon the 'essentials'—the radically Celtic and folk-lore character of the material of which it is composed.

We need, as it were, to place ourselves *en rapport* with the mind alike of the conquered and the conquerors. It is not easy to shake ourselves free from the traditions and methods of mere textual criticism and treat a question, which is after all more or less a question of scholarship, on a wider basis than such questions usually demand. Yet, unless I am much mistaken, this adherence to traditional methods, and consequent confusion between what is essential and what merely accidental, has operated disastrously in retarding the progress of Arthurian criticism ; because we have failed to realise the true character of the material involved, we have fallen into the error of criticising Arthurian romance as if its beginnings synchronised more or less exactly with its appearance in literary form. A more scientific method will, I believe, before long force us to the conclusion that the majority of the stories existed in a fully developed,

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coherent, and what we may fairly call a romantic form for a considerable period before they found literary shape. We shall also, probably, find that in their gradual development they owed infinitely less to independent and individual imagination than they did to borrowings from that inexhaustible stock of tales in which all peoples of the world appear to have a common share.

Thus I believe that the first two lessons which the student of Arthurian romance should take to heart are (*a*) the extreme paucity of any definite critical result, (*b*) the extreme antiquity of much of the material with which we are dealing.

But there is also a third point as yet insufficiently realised—the historic factors of the problem. We hear a great deal of the undying hatred which is supposed to have existed between the Britons and their Saxon conquerors; the historical facts, such as they are, have been worked for all they are worth in the interests of a particular school of criticism; but so far attention has been but little directed to a series of at least equally remarkable historic facts—the deliberate attempts made to conciliate the conquered Britons by a dexterous political use of their national beliefs and aspirations.

In 1894, when publishing my first essay in Arthurian criticism, the translation of Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival*, I drew attention to the very curious Angevin allusions of that poem, and the definite parallels to be

traced between the incidents of the story and those recorded in the genuine Angevin Chronicles. I then hazarded the suggestion that many of the peculiarities of this version might be accounted for by a desire on the part of the author to compliment the most noted prince of that house by drawing a parallel between the fortunes of Perceval and his mother, Herzeleide, and those of Henry of Anjou and his mother, the Empress Maude. Subsequent study has only confirmed the opinion then tentatively expressed; and I cannot but feel strongly that the average method of criticism, which contents itself merely with discussion of those portions of Wolfram's poem which correspond to other versions of the *Perceval* story, while it neglects those sections (*i.e.* the Angevin allusions and the Grai 'Templars') to which no parallel can be found elsewhere, is a method which entirely defeats its own object, and one from which only partial results can be obtained.

For critical purposes, and for determining certain central problems of the location and growth of the Arthurian Legend in literary form, I doubt whether the *Parzival* be not the most important extant text of the entire cycle: once realise—as if we thoroughly understand the historic conditions of the time we can scarcely fail to realise—that those two first introductory books could not possibly be written at the date of the composition of the German poem, and we shall then begin to recognise the extreme importance of

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discovering the when, where, and why of their original composition. Could we solve the riddle of the date and authorship of the earlier poem, that containing the Angevin allusions, the Grail Temple with its knights, and, we may add, the numerous Oriental references, we should, I believe, hold in our hand the master-key which would unlock the main problems confronting us. In all probability that unlocking when it comes will furnish us with more than one surprise.

The Arthurian problem is one which appeals not only to the literary critic but also to the historian. Have we not in the past been tempted to regard it too exclusively as the property of the one, and to hold that a British chieftain of whose name and exploits such scanty record survives can scarcely be a worthy subject of serious historic research? But if the study of history fails to elucidate much concerning the personality and feats of Arthur, it may yet discover much with regard to the growth and development of his legend.

The Arthurian cycle, both in literary value and in intrinsic interest, forms undoubtedly the most important group in Mediæval literature. Is it not a reproach to scholars that to-day, at the beginning of the twentieth century, there should be such an utter lack of knowledge of the proper order and relation of the members of that group? The most brilliant Arthurian scholars can offer us no more than an accurate acquaintance with certain texts, and, perhaps, an

hypothesis as to their relative order. The result is that a period extending over some fifty years or more of unusual literary activity, and far-reaching influence, lies at present outside the area of scientific knowledge, and is, for teaching purposes, practically non-existent. We cannot write the history of Arthurian literature, we cannot teach or lecture with confidence upon any portion of it, until a more determined and systematic attempt at unravelling its many puzzles be made.

Is it not time to seriously consider the desirability of co-ordinating the labours of individual scholars? At present each works, as Hal o' the Wynd fought, for his own hand, and it is only by a happy chance that the work of one supplements and supports that of another. Is not the time ripe for the formation of an International Society, composed of those students, in France, Germany, America and England, who are sincerely interested in the elucidation of this important section of Mediæval literature, and who, working on an organised and predetermined plan, shall co-operate towards rendering possible the compilation of a really accurate and scientific history of the Arthurian cycle? Those who took a share, however small, in such a work would at least have the satisfaction of knowing that they were contributing, not to the ephemeral curiosity or pleasure of the passing moment, but to the enduring profit and permanent intellectual wealth of the world.

DULWICH, *September* 1902.

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THE THREE DAYS' TOURNAMENT

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I



*Sul ne sai pas de mentir lart
Walter Map reset ben sa part.*

Ipomedon, fo. 82, ll. 29-30.

THESE words of the author of the *Ipomedon* were, some years ago, commented upon by Mr. Ward in his valuable *Catalogue of Romances in the British Museum*, vol. i. He there remarks that the allusion is especially valuable as being the direct ascription, by a contemporary, of the character of romance-writer to Walter Map, and that in apparent connection with the romance most persistently attributed to him—the *Prose Lancelot*.

The suggestive remarks of Mr. Ward do not appear hitherto to have attracted the attention they deserve. Recently, having occasion to write a brief notice of Walter Map, they came, for the first time, under my notice, and, taken in connection with certain points of the *Lancelot* study in which I had for some time been engaged, assumed an unexpected importance. It became evident to me that the whole question of the connection of the *Ipomedon* with Arthurian literature, and the light which the words of the author might

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throw upon the relation to each other of different forms of the same story, was well worth study; and might eventually be of material assistance in determining the much debated question of the position of Chrétien de Troyes in the Arthurian cycle.

In the following pages I propose to examine, first, the exact nature and value of the evidence of the *Ipomèdon* as regards Arthurian tradition; second, its bearing upon the versions of a popular incident in romance—the appearance of a knight at a tournament on three consecutive days, in the disguise of three different suits of armour—especially with relation to the versions of the *Prose Lancelot*; the *Lanzelet* of Ulrich von Zatzikhoven, and the *Cligès* of Chrétien de Troyes.

To begin with the *Ipomèdon*. As is probably known to most scholars, the scene of this story is laid in the south of Europe—Sicily, Calabria, Apulia—and the names of the characters are largely borrowed from classical sources. The poem relates at considerable length the wooing of the Princess of Calabria, known as *La Fièrè*, by Ipomedon, son of the King of Apulia. (In the second part of the poem the hero's father is dead, and he is, himself, king.) The lady has made a vow to wed none but the bravest of knights. Ipomedon, disguised as her cup-bearer, wins her love, and at a three days' tournament, in a varying armour of white, red, and black, wins her hand, but disappears without claiming it, under the pretext that he has not won sufficient fame to satisfy her pride. In the second part of the poem the lady is threatened by an unwelcome suitor, in the person of a hideous giant. Ipomedon, aware of her plight, disguises himself as a fool, and goes to her uncle's court, knowing

that she will send thither for aid. He demands from the king the gift of the first combat that shall offer, which is granted as a mere joke. On the appearance of the messenger sent by *La Fièvre*—the favourite friend of the princess—Ipomèdon claims the fulfilment of the king's pledge, much to the disgust of the maiden, who will have nothing to do with him at first, but whose confidence he wins by his valiant deeds on the journey, defeats and slays the giant; and hindered from evasion by her gallant cousin, who proves to be his own unknown brother, finally marries *La Fièvre*, and, we learn, is eventually slain with his brother before Thebes.

The author of this poem calls himself Hue de Rotelande, and says that he lives at Credehulle, which Mr. Ward identifies with Credenhill, near Hereford. After completing the *Ipomèdon* he wrote a sequel, *Prothesilaus*, which he dedicated to his patron, Gilbert Fitz-Baderon, Lord of Monmouth. This Gilbert, the only one of his family so named, was Lord of Monmouth certainly from 1176 to 1190-91, and may have succeeded to the dignity earlier, as the last mention of his father is in 1165-66; but the payment by Gilbert of a fine for trespassing in the royal forests in 1176 is the first mention we have of him. As in the *Ipomèdon* Hue refers to the siege of Rouen in 1174, it is clear that both his poems fall between that date and 1190, the year of Gilbert's death, but we cannot date them more exactly.¹ It is, however, certain that he wrote his poems on English ground, consequently it follows as a matter of course that any incident of Arthurian

¹ These and other details will be found in Mr. Ward's article on 'Ipomèdon,' *Catalogue of Romances*, vol. i.

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romances to which he may allude must have been known in England at that date.

Now what are the indications of familiarity with Arthurian tradition which we find in the *Ipomedon*? Setting aside for the present the Three Days' Tournament, the main subject of our study, we may point out certain other incidents which have attracted the attention of scholars. Professor Kölbing,¹ in his study of the English versions of the poem, remarks justly that every reader must be struck with the close resemblance between the circumstances under which, in the second part of the poem, Ipomedon undertakes the defence of *La Fièvre* and the opening of the *Bel Inconnu* poems.² It may be pointed out that while in the first instance the parallel is with the English rather than with the French version, *i.e.*, Ipomedon, like Libeaus Desconus, demands the *first combat* that shall offer, while Bel Inconnu simply asks that the first request he shall make be granted, the feature that the maiden leaves the court without waiting for her unwelcome defender agrees with the French rather than with the English version: in the latter both depart together. As in all romances of the *Bel Inconnu* cycle, the messenger is accompanied by a dwarf, who endeavours to induce a more gentle treatment of the knight, and as in all she continues to flout the hero till confuted by his deeds of valour. In the *Ipomedon*, certainly the conversion is more complete, as she offers the hero her love, if he will renounce the quest and accompany her to her own land. It is impossible to

¹ *Ipomedon* in drei englischen Bearbeitungen: Breslau 1889.

² *Supra*, p. xxix.

read the *Ipomedon* and to doubt that the author was familiar with the story of Gawain's unnamed son.¹

Again, the seneschal of King Meleager, Cananeus, Caymys, or Kaenius, as his name is variously spelt, with his sharp tongue and overbearing manner, is strongly reminiscent of Sir Kay; and the parallel is further brought out in the encounter with Ipomedon, where that hero thrusts him from his steed, '*tope over tayle*,' breaking in one version his shoulder-blade, in another his arm.² This should be compared with Lanzelet's joust with Kay, and its result '*er stach hern Keiin so daz im die füeze harte hô uf ze berge kaften und dem zalehaften daz houbet gein der erde fuor*;³ also with *Morien*,⁴ where Arthur reminds Kay of the result of his joust with Perceval—'*Hine stac u dat u wel sceen dat gi braect u canefbeen, ende dede u oec met onneren beide die vote opwerd keren*.'

Professor Kölbing also points out that the position held by Cabaneus, nephew of King Meleager, is analogous to that of Gawain, in the Arthurian cycle (to which I would also add that the name of *La Fièrè* recalls that of *L'Orgueilleuse de Logres* in Chrétien), and decides that the romance, as a whole, '*schliesst sich nach tendenz characterzeichnung und handlung diese klasse (i.e. dem artus-kreise) unverkennbar an*.'⁵ That is, the genre of composition was by 1174-90 so well established that it was freely imitated in romances entirely unconnected with the cycle by subject-matter.

¹ The fact that, as we have pointed out, he sometimes agrees with one, sometimes with the other version, seems to indicate that he knew the common original of both.

² *Ipomedon*, A. l. 5500.

³ *Lanzelet*, Von Zatzikhoven, ll. 2911-15.

⁴ *Dutch Lancelot*, vol. i. ll. 42,819 *et seq.*

⁵ *Ipomedon*, p. xxviii.

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When, therefore, in direct connection with an adventure of which several versions are preserved in the Arthurian cycle—the Three Days' Tournament—we find the author of the poem excusing himself for somewhat embroidering his tale, and quoting Walter Map as one who practises the same art, our minds naturally turn to the romances of that cycle, and to Map's reputed connection with Arthurian story.

As is well known, the question as to the share which may rightly be assigned to Walter Map in the evolution of the Arthurian legend is one of the problems of modern criticism. At one time or another, with the exception of the *Merlin* and the *Tristan*, all the great prose romances of the cycle, the *Lancelot*, in its completed form, the *Grand S. Graal*, *Queste*, and *Mort Artur*, have been assigned to him,¹ and till quite recently writers on early English literature did not scruple to accept the tradition. Probably even to-day the majority would name Walter Map as the populariser, if not the inventor, of the Grail legend. Those, however, who are familiar at first hand with the romances in question have long since realised that in their present form they represent the result of a long period of accretion, and have undergone many redactions; they cannot possibly, as they now stand, be held to be the work of any one writer, certainly not of one who took so active and leading a part in public affairs as did Map. Further, his own statement, in the famous words recorded by Giraldus Cambrensis, to whom they were addressed, '*Multa*

¹ For the various epilogues and ascriptions of authorship, cf. *Die Sage vom Gral*, Birch-Hirschfeld, chap. vii.

*scripsistis et multum adhuc scribitis et nos multa diximus. Vos scripta dedistis et nos verba,*¹ with the application that follows, have been held by Professor Birch-Hirschfeld and other scholars to be a direct denial on his part of any literary activity.¹ At the same time we know Map did write, and was interested in romantic and popular tales, further that he had the reputation of being a poet,² and the persistence of the tradition connecting him with the Arthurian cycle can hardly be set aside. The question is, do these words of Hue de Rotelande throw any light upon this disputed point? Can we hope by the aid of this contemporary of Map's to arrive at a conclusion which may assist us in determining the real nature of his contribution to the development of this famous cycle, and will the ascertaining of this fact help us, as the definite establishment of a single fact often does, to solve other problems closely connected therewith? Mr. Ward, when he wrote the article to which I have referred above, expressed a decided opinion on this point; and it appears to me that by following up the lines of research there indicated we shall attain results far more important in themselves, and far more startling in their ultimate effect than he then suspected.

First, let us see exactly what Hue says. The passage in question (which will not be found in the translations) occurs at the end of the first portion of the poem. The author has just been relating how his hero, who is living at King Meleager's court, in the assumed character of body-servant to the queen,

¹ Cf. Birch-Hirschfeld, *supra*.

² *Vide De Nugis Curialium*, ed. Wright, p. viii.

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scouts the idea of attending the tournament which is to decide who shall wed *La Fièrre* of Calabria, loudly expressing his preference for the pleasures of the chase. Each morning he leaves the court before daylight, announcing his departure by loud blasts of the horn; but having reached the forest, where his servant awaits him with steed and armour, he sends his 'Master,' Tholomy, to hunt in his stead; and arming himself each day in a different suit of armour, white, red, and black, proceeds to the tournament, where he carries off the prize for valour, unhorsing all the principal knights on either side, even to the king himself, and his valiant nephew Cabaneus. Each evening he returns to the forest, reassumes his hunter's garb, and with the spoils of the chase won by Tholomy takes his way to the court, where he vaunts the skill of his hounds above that of the unknown knight, and is roundly mocked for his lack of prowess by the ladies. After the third day he leaves secretly, to return to his own land, sending to the king, by the hand of a messenger, the spoils of his three days' victory. The seneschal, Cananeus, volunteers to bring him back, and is punished for his officious interference, as related above.¹ At the conclusion of this episode, Hue states that he is not lying—at least not more than a little—and if he be 'tis but the custom of the day, and all the blame should not be laid upon him, Walter Map is just as bad.'

*'Ore entendez seignurs mut ben
Hue dit ke il ni ment de ren
Fors aukune feiz neent mut
Nuls ne se pot garder par tut*

¹ Cf. *supra*, p. 5.

*En mendre afere mut suvent
 Un bon renable hom mesprent
 El mund nen ad un sul si sage
 Ki tuz iurz seit en un curage
 Kar cist secles lad ore en sei
 Nel metez mie tut sur mei
 Sul ne sai pas de mentir lart
 Walter Map reset ben sa part.*—P. 82, ll. 19-30.

Now shall we understand this merely as a general allusion, without any special significance, or was there anything in the story which Hue had just been relating which might reasonably be supposed to have brought Map to his mind? Mr. Ward very pertinently draws attention to the fact that this appearance at a tournament on successive days, in different armour, is precisely an adventure attributed to Lancelot, and the *Lancelot* is the romance most persistently attributed to Map. The parallel to which Mr. Ward refers is that contained in the earlier part of the *Prose Lancelot*.¹

Lancelot first appears at Arthur's court in white armour: he is known as 'le Blanc Chevalier.' On his first absence after receiving knighthood he is taken prisoner by the Lady of Malehaut, who detains him in her castle. A tournament, of a very warlike nature, taking place between Arthur and Galehaut, the lady releases Lancelot, who, disguised in red armour, performs deeds of surpassing valour. He returns to prison, and on the encounter between the kings being renewed, again appears, this time in black. Finally, he reveals himself to the queen, and tells her that all the feats of arms he has achieved in the characters

¹ Cf. P. Paris, *Romans de la Table Ronde*, vol. iii.

of white, red, and black knight were undertaken in her honour.

The general resemblance is, as Mr. Ward remarks, too striking to be overlooked ; though, as he does *not* remark, there are certain differences which seem to indicate that the version of the *Prose Lancelot* has undergone some modification. Thus, there are not three consecutive days, but Lancelot's appearance in the three characters occurs at widely separated intervals. Further, Mr. Ward does not seem to be aware that this is but one instance out of three in which the same, or a similar, adventure is attributed to Lancelot.

In the latter part of the *Prose Lancelot*, the section represented by the Dutch translation, we find Arthur holding a tournament, which has been suggested by Guinevere with the view of recalling Lancelot, who has long been absent, to court, and heightening his fame. Lancelot returns secretly, unknown to all but the queen, who sends him a message to come and discomfit the knights who are jealous of him. Lancelot appears in *red* armour and overthrows them all. The queen demands another tournament in three days' time, when Lancelot appears as a *white* knight, with the same result. After this he reveals himself to Arthur.¹

But the best parallel is that contained in the *Lanzelet* of Ulrich von Zatzikhoven. Here Lanzelet makes his first appearance at court at a three days' tournament ; the first day dressed in *green*, the second in *white*, the third in *red* ; overthrows all opposed to

¹ Cf. *D. L.*, vol. i. ll. 19,595 *et seq.* ; *Legend of Sir Lancelot*, p. 235.

him, including Kay,¹ and takes his departure, without revealing himself.

With these repeated parallels before us, it seems impossible to doubt that when Hue de Rotelande referred to Walter Map, in connection with the tournament episode of *Ipomedon*, he had in his mind a version of the *Lancelot*, which also contained such a story, and which was attributed to the latter writer.

But what could this version have been? Certainly not the *Prose Lancelot* in its present form. As we remarked before, this romance is the result of slow growth and successive redactions, and the two parallels contained in it bear marks of modification and dislocation. In my recent studies on the Lancelot legend² I have pointed out that in the process of evolution it certainly passed through a stage in which it was closely connected with, and affected by, the *Perceval* story. Gradually the popularity of the hero of the younger tale obscured that of the elder; and in the *Lancelot*, as we now have it, the traces of *Perceval* influence have almost disappeared from the majority of the printed versions, though interesting survivals are still to be found in certain manuscripts and in the Dutch translation. Now one of the best known adventures attributed to Perceval is that in which the sight of blood-drops on new-fallen snow—caused by a bird having been wounded, or slain, by a hawk—recalls to his mind the lady of his love, and plunges him into a trance; in which he is rudely attacked by Kay, who would bring him by force to court. He retaliates by unhorsing the seneschal with such force that he breaks,

¹ Cf. *supra*, p. 5.

² *The Legend of Sir Lancelot du Lac*, Grimm Library, vol. xii.

in one version both arms, in others, an arm and a leg.¹ It should also be noted that in the *Peredur* a raven has alighted on the slain bird, and we have the three colours, black, red, and white, recalling the lady's raven hair, white skin, and crimson lips and cheeks.²

Taking into consideration the proved connection existing between the *Perceval* and the earlier forms of the *Lancelot*, it would seem most probable that a version of the tournament which included a similar discomfiture of the seneschal would belong to an earlier stage of evolution than one in which Kay did not appear. As I have pointed out above,³ the *Lanzelet* version not only includes Kay's overthrow, but recounts it in words that forcibly recall the *Perceval* episode.

It also seems probable that it was such a form which was known to the author of the *Ipomedon*, as he makes the discomfiture of the seneschal Cananeus, whose resemblance to Kay has already been pointed out, follow immediately upon the tournament episode.

So far, then, as the priority of existing versions is concerned, we must, I think, give a verdict in favour of the *Lanzelet*, though with the reservation that even here there has been, as we shall presently see, a certain modification of the story as known to Hue.

What now do we know of the source of the *Lanzelet*? From the statement of the author,⁴ we learn that the original of this poem was a French book, '*daz welsche buoch von Lanzelete*,' brought to Germany by Hugo de

¹ Cf. the reference to this adventure in *Morien*, quoted *supra*, p. 5.

² For these three colours in this connection, cf. my translation of *Parzival*, vol. i. p. 317.

³ P. 5.

⁴ Cf. *Lanzelet*, ll. 9309 *et seq.*

Morville, one of the hostages who, in 1194, replaced Richard Cœur de Lion in the prison of Leopold of Austria. Thus we know that the French book must have been prior to that date, but so far no one has detected any reference that would enable us to fix the period of composition more accurately. But the character of the romance as we possess it—a collection of episodes, many of them of marked folk-lore character, loosely strung together, and harmonising but ill with each other—makes it highly probable that the constituent parts of the romance had possessed an independent existence prior to being strung together on the slender thread of the hero's personality. It is therefore perfectly possible that the French source of the *Lanzelet* was in existence before Hue de Rotelande wrote the *Ipomedon*; it is more than possible, indeed, as we shall see, a fact of almost certain demonstration—that the adventure of the Three Days' Tournament had been ascribed to Lancelot, certainly by 1160, and most probably before that date.

In the Didot *Perceval*, a romance which probably formed part of a very early cyclic redaction of the Arthurian legend, and one in which Lancelot plays a very subordinate rôle, we find an allusion to '*le fiz à la fille à la femme de Malehot*,¹ which seems to suggest that even at that comparatively early stage the incident had undergone the modification familiar to us in the *Prose Lancelot*. In the result, I think we shall find that it formed one of the first steps in the development of the *Lancelot* story.²

¹ Hucher, *Le Grand S. Graal*, vol. i. p. 421.

² Professor Foerster's remark (*Charrette*, Introduction, p. xlv), that Hugo would, not improbably, take with him a copy of the last romance

So far as the evidence of the *Ipomedon* goes it suggests, if it does not absolutely prove, that at the period when that poem was written there was current a story which ascribed to Lancelot the adventures of the Three Days' Tournament, in a form which, as might be expected in any early Lancelot version, showed traces of the influence of the *Perceval*, and which was popularly attributed to Walter Map. Of the versions which we now possess, that of *Lanzelet* best corresponds to these conditions.

But there is another claimant in the field, and one whose right to be considered the original hero of the adventure it would, according to Professor Foerster's opinion, be sheer impiety to doubt!—the *Cligés* of Chrétien de Troyes. In the poem of that name the hero makes his first appearance at Arthur's court at a tournament lasting for *four* successive days: he wears successively *black, green, red, and white* armour; and overthrows, on the three first days, Segramor, Lancelot, and Perceval; fighting on the fourth day an undecided combat with Gawain.¹ Professor Foerster, commenting on the *Lanzelet*,² remarks of the tour-

which had created a popular *furor*, is one of those gratuitous assumptions which, to the learned professor, assume the virtue of facts, but which cannot be admitted, by any serious critic, as a contribution to the argument. Professor Foerster seems to imagine a twelfth century 'Mudie' with a 'run' on the latest novel! If the source of the *Lanzelet* had created in any sense a *furor*, it would scarcely have disappeared so completely. Considering the slowness of reproduction in those days, it is at least as likely that the book was an old and valued favourite; but as I said above, such hypotheses do not advance the question one way or the other.

¹ Cf. *Cligés*, ll. 4575-4985.

² *Charrette*, p. xliii.

nament episode '*das Wechseln der Rüstung stammt aus Cligés*'; and further on¹ affirms that Chrétien '*sich—im Cligés sicher als ganz selbständig gezeigt hat*,' a statement he repeats on p. cxxviii, and in another place² with even more emphasis, '*Dieser selbe Kristian ist in einem Roman wie NIEMAND ableugnen kann GANZ SELBSTÄNDIG vorgegangen, im Cligés*.' That is, Professor Foerster asserts, and as emphatically as print will allow him, that Chrétien was entirely independent in *Cligés*; that the episode of the change of armour is the same in the two poems, and was borrowed by the author of the *Lanzelet* from Chrétien, and therefore, if words mean anything, that Chrétien invented the story, and that Cligés is the real and original hero of the tale.

Well, if assertion were argument, and a liberal display of large type could settle intricate questions of literary criticism, we might hold the dependence of *Lanzelet* upon *Cligés* to be—not proven, no—but determined. But there are some few heretics who suspect that Professor Foerster's *ipse dixit*, though imposed with all the weight of a Papal *imprimatur*, is not really more competent to decide a problem of sources than is that notoriously fallacious engine for the suppression of free investigation, and therefore, *more heretico*, we will be presumptuous enough to examine the question for ourselves.

So far as the dates of the *existing* versions are concerned, be it said at once that the *Cligés* is the older; *i.e.* it is older than the *Ipomedon*, the *Lanzelet*, or the *Prose Lancelot*; but how it stands with regard to

¹ P. cxxvi.

² P. cxxxviii.

the lost French source of the *Lanzelet* is not so easily determined. The exact date of the *Cligés* is not known. It was written after *Érec*, the translations from Ovid, and the lost *Tristan*; but before the *Charrette* and the *Yvain*, which fall between the years 1164-73. Professor Foerster, in his Introduction to the *Charrette*,¹ has expressed himself in favour of as late a date as possible for that poem—towards 1170; and since the *Perceval*, Chrétien's last work, was written about 1182, we can scarcely place the beginning of his literary career earlier than 1150. If we place the *Cligés* before 1160, we shall, I think, be ascribing too great an activity to the decade 1150-60, in comparison with 1160-70. It seems more suitable to place the *Cligés* about 1160; but, as we shall see, the argument is not affected by a few years one way or the other.

The most important factor in the problem, the French source of the *Lanzelet*, no longer exists,² yet it appears certain that the whole question hinges upon the possibility of this, or an analogous French *Lancelot* story, having been in existence previous to the work of Chrétien de Troyes. It therefore becomes necessary, not only to carefully compare the two versions, that of the *Cligés* and that of the *Lanzelet*, but also to inquire as to the source from which the story was originally derived. As we shall see, these two parts of our investigation mutually supplement

¹ P. xix.

² I believe myself that the two works of the greatest importance for determining the evolution of the Arthurian cycle are these lost French sources of the *Lanzelet* and of the *Parzival*. It is not, I think, impossible that fragments at least may remain entombed in some library. When their importance is more generally recognised there may perhaps be an organised attempt made at their discovery.

each other, and in the sum-total present us with a compact and striking body of evidence.

As a first step in the inquiry we will take the *Cligés*, the *Lanzelet*, and the *Ipomedon* (as being anterior to the *Lanzelet* in its present form), and see if we can discover any traces of a knowledge of Chrétien's work on the part of the two later writers. The answer will be unhesitatingly in the negative. In neither work is there any reminiscence (with the exception of the episode in question) either in name or incident of the *Cligés*. As a matter of fact, allusions to this poem are exceptionally rare. Professor Foerster states that there were two German translations, one by Ulrich von Türheim and another by Konrad Fleck, but of these only fragments remain. The *Parzival* once mentions a Clías, a knight of the Round Table, and in another place refers to the story of Alexander and Soredamors, but in each case it is doubtful whether the allusion is to Chrétien's poem.¹

¹ I have not seen either of these German fragments. Professor Foerster's tendency to claim as Chrétien's undoubted property everything that even remotely resembles the work of the French poet makes caution needful. I give the statement entirely upon his authority. With regard to the passage in the *Parzival*, Book XII. l. 116, *et seq.*, at first sight it seems clearly to refer to Chrétien's poem; but, as Professor Foerster himself admits, the work clearly consists of two sections, and it seems quite possible that the first part, the story of Alexander and Soredamors, may have been known independently. As the testimony of the *Perceval* poems proves, there was current a love story connected with a sister of Gawain. The weak point in this *Parzival* allusion is, that the poet is recalling the torments that Gawain and his kin have suffered through '*Minne*.' Now the love story of Cligés and Phenice is far more tragic than that of Cligés' parents; and it is difficult to understand why, if the writer knew the *whole* poem, he should refer only to the weaker illustration, as both are equally connected with Gawain. I suspect myself that the allusion was in Wolfram's source, and refers to the source of the

Cligés.

The English '*Sir Cleges*'¹ has no connection whatever with the earlier hero, and Malory's allusions to a *Sir Clegis* do not go beyond the mere name, and cannot be identified with either. In my *Lancelot* studies I have commented upon the indifference with which *Cligés* appears to have been received as being somewhat curious considering the undoubted literary value of the poem.²

On the other hand, the *Cligés* knows Lancelot as one of Arthur's most valiant knights, the third in order of merit, a position he certainly could not have held before his story had reached a fairly advanced stage of development. Indeed, Chrétien's references to this hero deserve particular attention.³ He is first mentioned in *Erec* as a knight of the Round Table, third in rank, the two first being Gawain and Erec, but is only a name, taking no part in the action of the poem. In *Cligés* he occupies the same position, but here Perceval, and not Erec, ranks second. Lancelot appears upon the scene once, and once only, when he is overthrown by *Cligés* at the tournament in question. In the *Charrette* he is the hero of the poem, the first of Arthur's knights, the lover of the queen, and her rescuer from the prison of Meleagant. In the *Chevalier au Lion* which followed, his name is mentioned but once, and that in connection with an allusion to the *Charrette*. In the *Perceval* his name never appears at all. It seems extraordinary that the significance of these allusions, taken as a group, should so long have escaped detection. As a matter of fact I failed to

¹ Printed in Weber's *Metrical Romances*, vol. i.

² Cf. *Legend of Sir Lancelot*, p. 81.

³ *Ibid.* p. 5.

grasp their importance myself when commenting upon them in my *Lancelot* studies. Thus, the tournament episode in *Cligés* is so close a parallel to that of the *Lanzelet* that, as we have seen, Professor Foerster declares the one to be the source of the other. The rescue of Guinevere from Meleagant, the theme of the *Charrette*, parallels her rescue from Falerîn, also in the *Lanzelet*. In both the queen is abducted against her will; in both the prison is of an otherworld character: in the one Lancelot is of the party of rescuers, but takes no prominent share in the enterprise; in the other he is the sole agent of her deliverance. In commenting upon the poem in my *Lancelot* studies,¹ I pointed out that the story was, in its essence, of so primitive a character, that it must certainly be, in its origin, of an earlier date than any extant literary version; and that, of the two before us, the *Lanzelet*, by its unlocalised character, the details it gives of Falerîn's stronghold, and the comparatively unimportant position assigned to Lancelot, must be considered the older.

Further, in the roll of knights named in *Erec*, following such well-known names as Gawain, Erec, Lancelot, Gornemanz, le Biaux Coarz (Bel Couart), Le lez Hardis (le Laid Hardi), and Melianz de Liz, we have *Mauduiz li Sages*, who, as I have elsewhere pointed out (*Lancelot*, p. 80), can hardly be other than the enchanter of the *Lanzelet*, Malduz der Wîse. Taking all these facts into consideration, the position Chrétien assigns to Lancelot, and the two adventures (they are really only two, the incidents of the *Charrette* are all subsidiary to the freeing of Guinevere) he records, is it not perfectly clear that Chrétien knew, and followed, an early

¹ Chaps. ii and iv.

version of the *Lancelot* story, akin to, if not identical with, the lost French source of Ulrich von Zatzikhoven? Is it not far more probable that in the *Cligés* he borrowed from the *Lancelot* than that an adventure so persistently, and so early, attributed to that well-known hero should have been borrowed from the obscure *Cligés*?

If it be objected, as of course those who hold Professor Foerster's views will object, that Chrétien's position in the literary world of the day was such that it is infinitely more likely that he should be the lender rather than the borrower, I would ask, but how if the story from which he borrowed was held, rightly or wrongly, to be the work of Walter Map? Map was a much more important personage than Chrétien. Chrétien was a poet, and a good poet, but at the best to the world in general he would be no more than the favoured servant and dependant of a minor French princess. Map was a man of political importance, the trusted companion and emissary of the most prominent monarch of the day. What was the position held by Map in the eyes of that same public to whom Chrétien appealed may be gathered by the anxiety which the romance-writers showed to shelter themselves under his name. We have one or two Arthurian poems, such as *e.g.* *Diu Krône*, which purport to be by Chrétien; we have a whole mass of prose romance, practically the main body of Arthurian legend in its later form, which professes to be the work of Walter Map. Could testimony as to the relative status of the two men in the eyes of their contemporaries be more eloquent? Is it likely that Chrétien, even if he had held as exalted an idea of his own work as his latter-

day admirers would credit him with—and he did *not*—would have thought it derogatory to his dignity to borrow from Map? I think not; and if we had not a jot or a tittle of further evidence on the subject, I should contend that, on the evidence of the poems alone, we have strong grounds for maintaining the priority over *Cligés* of a lost *Lancelot* version.

But as it happens, our case does not rest upon this evidence alone. We have at hand an important witness; a witness to whose evidence Professor Foerster and his followers shut their eyes and stop their ears, but who nevertheless is slowly, but surely, winning recognition as an important factor in the determination of such problems as those we are discussing. Let us turn to folk-lore, and find if from the lips of popular tradition we can gather evidence that may help to decide the question. We shall find an answer startling in its point and clearness.

THE FOLK-TALE

The *Contes Lorrains* of M. Cosquin¹ contains a story, *Le Petit Berger*, in which we shall find our tournament adventure in what we may term full fairy-tale form. A princess expresses a desire to own a flock of sheep; her father consents, and hires a lad to guard them, of whom the princess becomes secretly enamoured. On three successive days the shepherd penetrates into a forbidden wood, and on each occasion slays a terrible giant, clad in steel, silver, or golden armour. By the death of these giants the hero becomes master of three castles, of steel, silver, and gold, in each of which he

¹ Vol. ii. No. XLIII.

finds a suit of armour and a steed to correspond. He keeps the feat a profound secret, and when later on the king proclaims a three days' tournament, the prize of which is the hand of the princess, he appears each day in different armour, and mounted on the corresponding steed—steel, silver or golden—wins the tournament, and weds the lady.

Now this is merely the shortest and simplest form of a story, which is found practically all the world over. Let us look at some of the variants.

In the notes to *Le Petit Berger* M. Cosquin cites a Tyrolean variant, where instead of three giants the hero slays three dragons, thereby winning three castles. The armour corresponds to that of the previous tale; but the horses are black, red, and white, herein agreeing with the *Ipomedon* and the *Prose Lancelot*; the compiler refers to other versions from the same country given by Zingerle,¹ but cites no details. In an Italian variant the horses are of crystal, silver, and gold.

Now let us turn to another of M. Cosquin's tales, *Jean de l'Ours*,² where the main theme of the story is the release of a princess from an Otherworld prison. Here we shall find a Greek tale given, the details of which are, as we shall see, specially important for our investigation. A prince delivers his sister and three stranger princesses from the prison of a *drakos* (translated by M. Cosquin as *sorte d'ogre*) on the summit of a high mountain. When about to descend himself, his brother cuts the cord and leaves him a prisoner on the mountain. In the ogre's castle he

¹ *Tiroler Kinder und Haus-Märchen.*

² *Contes Lorrains*, vol. i. No. 1.

sees three marvellous objects: a greyhound of velvet pursuing a hare also of velvet; a golden ewer which pours water of itself into a golden basin; a golden hen with her chickens. He also finds three winged horses, respectively white, red, and green, and sets them at liberty. In gratitude they transport him to the plain, and each gives him a hair from their tail, bidding him burn it when he needs their aid. The prince takes service with a goldsmith in his father's city. The eldest brother desires to marry the eldest of the rescued princesses; she demands a velvet greyhound pursuing a velvet hare, such as she has seen in the ogre's castle. The king offers a reward to any who can make such an object. The pretended goldsmith's apprentice undertakes to do so, and sends the green horse to fetch the original.' At the tournament in honour of the wedding he appears on the horse in a dress to correspond, carries off the honours of the day, and escapes unrecognised. His second brother marries the second princess. She demands the golden ewer—the red horse comes to his aid, and he wins the tournament in his red dress. When the third and youngest princess is to be wedded to the king's brother he appears in white, on the white steed, slays the would-be bridegroom with a cast of his javelin, reveals his identity, and wins the bride. Here we have the three colours of the *Lanzelet*.

Again, in the variants of *Le Prince et son Cheval*, another tale of the same collection,¹ we find the Three Days' Tournament allied to the rescue and escape from the Otherworld *motif*. In this latter story we have the well-known incident of escape from a giant,

¹ *Contes Lorrains*, vol. i. No. XII.

or a magician, by means of magical objects which, thrown behind the escaping pair, erect mysterious barriers between pursuer and pursued.

In his notes to *Le Petit Berger*, M. Cosquin quotes a remark of M. Mullenhoff, to the effect that in one variant of the story collected by him it is combined with '*le conte bien connu où le héros gravit à cheval une montagne de verre, pour conquérir la main d'une belle princesse.*'¹ Now the glass mountain is a well-recognised form of the Otherworld prison. Probably, too, we ought to connect with this some variants of the tale where the feat is to attain the summit of a high tower; a version of this is known among the Avars of the Caucasus; here the horses are blue, red, and black.

Thus we may note two well-marked classes of the tales, in one of which (*a*) the hero simply wins the hand of the princess at a tourney; in the second of which (*b*) he also rescues her from the Otherworld.

But there is a third variant of our story, in which the feat differs somewhat from *b*. The hero is again a rescuer, but this time he rescues the princess from death at the jaws of a monster, generally a dragon. This we may call class *c*. In the notes to *Leopold*,² M. Cosquin refers to a German variant where the combat lasts for three days, and horses and armour are black, red, and white. In this connection, as member of class *c*, Mr. Hartland has studied the story in his well-known *Legend of Perseus*,³ and some of the variants he gives we shall find of interest to us.

In an Irish version, *The Thirteenth Son of the King of Erin*,⁴ the hero, who has previously slain three

¹ *Contes Lorrains*, vol. ii. p. 96.

² *Op. cit.*, vol. ii. No. LV.

³ Grimm Library, vols. ii., iii., v.

⁴ *Perseus*, vol. iii. p. 4.

giants, and taken possession of their castles and wealth, comprising three steeds, black, brown, and red, rescues the king's daughter from a great monster, a serpent of the sea, 'which must get a king's daughter to devour every seven years.' The combat lasts three days; but though the hero appears each day in a different dress, only on the first does it correspond with the colour of his horse. Here the tournament incident is lacking.

A very good example, this time hailing from the Odenwald, contains the conquest of the giants (eight), the three days' fight with the dragon, and the Three Days' Tournament. Here the hero is a king's son, who, seeing the portrait of the princess, falls in love with her and dares the adventure from which his father shrinks.¹ This tale, as Mr. Hartland points out, apparently bears traces of literary influence, and it certainly recalls the *données* of the *Ipomedon* where the hero, also a king's son, is attracted by the fame of *La Fièvre's* beauty, before he sees her.

In a gipsy variant from Transylvania, also given by Mr. Hartland, the princess has been carried off by a dragon to the glass mountain (thus apparently combining *b* and *c*); and the horse—there is but one—has the mysterious property of appearing red in the morning, white at noon, and black at night.

It must be borne in mind that the legend which Mr. Hartland was engaged in studying was, before all else, a rescue legend—the rescue of Andromeda—consequently the variants of our tale, collected by him, are practically confined to what we have designated as class *c*, where the feat performed by the hero is the rescue of the princess from a monster. This particular feature he

¹ *Perseus*, vol. iii. p. 15.

carries back, in insular tradition, to the old Irish story of Cuchullin's rescue of Deborghill from the Fomori; sea-robbers, whose real character and origin are doubtful. The hero hears sounds of wailing, and finds the maiden, the daughter of the King of the Isles, exposed upon the seashore. He confronts the Fomori, three in number, and slays them one after the other. Thus the triple combat is preserved, but it appears evident that, even at this early date, the story had been modified in the interests of romantic saga.¹ With this (class c) form of the story we frequently find combined what is known as *The False Claimant* 'motif.' The hero disappears after the rescue, having either left behind him some proof of his identity, such as, *e.g.*, the binding of the heads of the monster on a withy in such a manner that none but himself can unloose them; or having in his possession such a proof as, *e.g.* the tongues of the severed heads, or the handkerchief, ring, or ear-ring of the princess. By means of this proof he confutes the cowardly rival who claims to have achieved the feat. This particular form of the story is perhaps, on the whole, the one in which it is best known. There is one group which, as we shall see, is of extraordinary interest and importance for the special study in which we are engaged.

In his *Popular Tales of the West Highlands*, under the title of the *Sea Maiden*, Mr. Campbell gives the following story.² An old and childless fisherman meets with persistent ill-luck in his calling, till one day a sea-maiden rises from the waves and promises him future success, if he in return will give her his firstborn

¹ Cf. *The Cuchullin Saga*, Grimm Library, vol. viii. p. 81.

² Vol. i. p. 96.

son (assuring him of the birth of three). The fisher consents, and all falls out as the maiden foretells. Grown to manhood, the son, aware of the fate in store for him, resolves to go 'where there is not a drop of sea-water.' He sets out, and on his journey finds a lion, a wolf, and a falcon disputing over the carcase of a horse. He divides the spoil between them, and in return they promise him their aid, should he be in need of it. He becomes herdsman to a king, and we have the adventure with the three giants, in which the grateful beasts aid him, and he wins a white, a red, and a green filly 'that will go through the skies'—obviously the winged horses of the Greek folk-tale¹—and three dresses to correspond. Here he also slays the giants' mother, and wins a comb and a basin, the use of which will make him the most beautiful man on earth. 'Follows the adventure with the sea-monster, a dragon apparently. The fight lasts for three days, and he appears each day in a different dress, and mounted on a different steed. The princess makes a mark on his forehead as he sleeps, and thus identifies the hero as her rescuer. They marry, but while walking by the seashore, the sea-maiden rises from the waves and carries off the hero as her property. The princess, by the advice of a soothsayer, succeeds in releasing her husband, and with the help of the grateful beasts, destroys the soul of the sea-maiden, which is in an egg. She being slain, the pair live happily ever after.

In this particular variant there is no *False Claimant*; but he appears in version number three of this story, and in version four we have the curious detail that the beast 'was a fresh-water lake when he had killed her.'

¹ Cf. *supra*, p. 23.

Students of folk-lore will note that the tale in this form includes features not found in the majority of the versions, but representing well-recognised folk-tale *formulæ*. Thus the *Life Token* is here—incomplete—the maiden gives the fisherman 'something' to be given to his wife, his horse, and his dog (obviously a *fisherman* does not need a horse and a dog—these two features do not belong to each other); the wife has three sons, the horse three foals, and the dog three pups. Horse and dog ought rightly to play a part in the story, but in this special variant they do not appear, though in another they are mentioned in a subordinate rôle. The *Grateful Beasts* and the *External Soul* are equally well known in folk-tale, though again, as a rule, in a different connection. But the tournament is lacking; and after examining many variants of the tale, I have come to the conclusion that this feature belongs exclusively to the continental versions. Horses and dresses are found in the insular forms, but, so far, I have not found a single instance of the tournament. On the other hand, no continental variant appears to contain the sea-maiden episodes.

If we now summarise the leading incidents of the various groups, we shall find them somewhat as follows:—

1. Hero—King's son. Herdsman or shepherd.
Fisherman's son turned herdsman.
2. Slays three giants and wins three castles in which he finds three steeds of different colours with dresses or armour to correspond. The horses are occasionally winged.
3. Appears at a Three Days' Tournament in

these dresses, and thus wins the hand of a princess.

(Incidents 1, 2, 3, which combined correspond to *Le Petit Berger*, form the shortest version of our story, but probably not the most primitive.)

4. Rescues the princess from an 'Otherworld' prison. Form of imprisonment varies, but the 'rescue' is most generally found in company with the tournament.
5. Rescues princess from a monster. Here the conflict generally lasts three days, the three disguises are employed, and the tournament is often absent.
6. Is robbed of the credit of his deed by a cowardly rival. This, which is most generally found in combination with 5, is also sometimes found in a modified form combined with 4, and is often lacking altogether.
7. Is carried off by a mermaid, to whom he had been promised before his birth. This appears to be confined to the Celtic group collected by Mr. Campbell.

If the reader will refer to the various examples I have given above, he will see that these seven incidents represent what we may call the perfect skeleton of our story (to use a simile often applied by Mr. Campbell), though the bones are differently placed in different versions.

But, having summarised them, we also become aware of a very curious coincidence. Out of these seven incidents, six are found, and found more than once, in the earlier forms of the *Lancelot* story. Thus dropping

out incident 2, the winning of the armour, to which I know no good parallel, we find that Lancelot was a king's son (incident 1), which, in itself, of course counts for little, but is of value in combination with other features (*Lanzelet—Prose Lancelot*); that he appears at a tournament, three days running, in different armour, the colours of which correspond with the prevailing colours of the folk-tale—green, red, white, or black, red, white (incident 3) (*Lanzelet—Prose Lancelot*); that he frees a princess (queen) from an Otherworld prison (incident 4) (*Charrette—Prose Lancelot—Lanzelet*, modified form); that he slays a monster (apparently a dragon), and is robbed by a cowardly rival (incidents 5 and 6) (*Morien*). A second version of the *False Claimant* story is found in *Le cerf au pied blanc*. Finally, when a child, he was carried off by a water maiden, *meer-wîb* (incident 7) (*Lanzelet—Prose Lancelot*).

Now these are characteristics which, in their *ensemble*, he shares with no other Arthurian hero. True, Gawain visits the Otherworld, but he does so rather in the character of lover of the queen of that world than as rescuer of one confined within its precincts. In the Dutch *Walewein* alone, so far as I know, is his rôle definitely that of the deliverer. But none of the other incidents belong to his story. So, too, Tristan is the hero of a very fine version of the *Dragon Slayer* and *False Claimant* story, and it is moreover probable that the *Morien* version has borrowed certain details from the *Tristan*, but he too can claim no share in the other incidents. The close correspondence, point by point, with a folk-tale of so widespread and representative a character, is, I submit, a peculiarity of the earlier *Lancelot* story, which is of extraordinary interest as

throwing light upon the genesis and growth of Arthurian legend.

In this connection I have by no means forgotten the energetic protests which, in certain quarters, were evoked by Mr. Nutt's attempt to show that the story of *Perceval* might in this way be connected with popular tales; and I am quite prepared to be told that tales collected in the nineteenth century are not to be trusted as indications of the sources of twelfth century romance. But in the instance before us the evidence, while of precisely the same nature as in the case of *Perceval*, exceeds it, both in bulk and extent. The story is not one story, but a large and well-marked group of tales; the folk-lore parallels affect not one, but many incidents of the romance. How large and how widely diffused is that story-group can only be appreciated by those who will examine the lists of variants appended by M. Cosquin to the four stories I have named above and those cited by Mr. Campbell under the heading of the *Sea Maiden*, and then compare these stories with the numerous examples given by Mr. Hartland in his exhaustive study of the *Perseus* legend. The incidents are, as I have shown, six out of a possible list of seven. If, further, we remember that the group, with all its varying forms, is connected with such pre-historic heroes as Perseus and Cuchullin, we have, I think, a sufficient answer to those critics who would reject the evidence *en masse* on the ground of modernity.

But supposing, for the sake of argument, that we accept the possible priority of the romantic over the popular form, what, with regard to the criticism of the Arthurian literary cycle, is the logical result? This:

if the folk-tale be dependent upon a romance, that romance must of necessity be the *Lancelot*, as no other hero offers the same combination of incident. But a version of the *Lancelot* story, from which *all* these incidents could have been borrowed, must have been older than any form of the story we now possess. As we have seen above, the correspondence is sometimes with one, sometimes with another version; and a very famous incident of the tale, the *False Claimant*, only exists now in two romances, each of them preserved in an isolated and unique form. Therefore, if this be not a fully proven instance of the conversion of a popular folk-tale into an Arthurian romance, it must be a case of the development of a folk-tale from a fully organised and coherent *Lancelot* story in a form anterior to Chrétien. The adherents of the theory which ascribes independent invention to Chrétien de Troyes, and a literary origin to the Arthurian stories, can make their choice between these two solutions of the problem—one or the other it must be.

For myself, I unreservedly accept the verdict pronounced by Mr. Campbell upon the *Sea Maiden* as representative of the entire story-group. 'Is it possible that a Minglay peasant and Straparola¹ (*or we may add Hue de Rotelande and the peasants of the Odenwald and Lorraine*)—neither of whom can have seen a giant, or a flying horse, or a dragon, or a mermaid—could separately imagine all these impossible things, and, having imagined them simultaneously, invent the incidents of the story and arrange so many of them in the same order?

¹ A reference to *Fortunio*, one of the tales of our group, included in the fifteenth century collection of Straparola.



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'Is it on the other hand possible that all these barefooted, bareheaded, simple men, who cannot read, should yet learn the contents of one class of rare books and of no other? I cannot think so.

'I have gone through the whole *Sea Maiden* story, and all its Gaelic versions, and marked and numbered each separate incident, and divided the whole into its parts, and then set the result beside the fruit of a similar dissection of Straparola's *Fortunio*, and I find nearly the whole of the bones of the Italian story, and a great many bones which seem to belong to some original antediluvian Aryan tale. The Scotch (*insular*) is far wilder and more mythical than the Italian (*continental*).¹ The one savours of tournaments, kings' palaces, and the manners of Italy long ago; the other of flocks and herds, fishermen and pastoral life; but the Highland imaginary beings are further from reality and nearer to creatures of the brain. The horses of Straparola are very material and walk the earth; those of old John MacPhie are closely related to Pegasus and the horses of the Veda, and fly and soar through grimy peat-reek to the clouds.'²

Mr. Campbell continues: 'What is true of the Gaelic and Italian versions is equally true of all others which I know. If examined, they will be found to consist of a bare tree of branching incidents common to all, and so elaborate that no minds could possibly have invented the whole seven or eight times

¹ The additions in italics are mine.—J. L. W.

² To this our present investigation enables us to add that while M. Cosquin's shepherd lad unites the pastoral features with the courtly tournament, the Greek variant retains the flying steeds and gives us the tournament to boot.

over¹ without some common model, and yet no one of these is the model, for the tree is defective in all, and its foliage has something peculiar to each country in which it grows. They are specimens of the same plant, but their common stock is nowhere to be found.'² Were Mr. Campbell living now, may we not feel sure that to these closing words he would add: *Assuredly it is not to be sought in an Arthurian romance of the twelfth century?*

THE ROMANCE

So much for the present as regards our folk-tale as a whole. Let us now see what light the study of it may have thrown upon the special subject of our investigation—the Three Days' Tournament. And first of all, I think it has definitely settled the correctness of our title. East or west, north or south, wherever we have traced our story, whatever the hero's feat—whether the rescuing the princess from a devouring dragon, or the winning her hand at a knightly tournament—the days required to complete the task are *three*—neither more nor less.

Mr. Hartland, to whom I referred the point, remarks that the unvarying tendency in certain families of folk-tales, notably those of Oriental origin, is to crystallise a small but indefinite number into *three*. Now Mr. Campbell, as we have seen, detects a likeness between the flying horses of the *Sea Maiden* tales, and the horses of the Veda, and Mr. Joseph Jacobs,

¹ The number is of course far greater, but Mr. Campbell unfortunately did not live to know the *Contes Lorrains* or the *Perseus*.

² *Popular Tales of the West Highlands*, vol. iv. pp. 277, 278.

in a note appended to another tale,¹ quotes a further remark of the same writer, to the effect that the many-coloured horses of Indian mythology may account for all the magical horses of folk-tales. So if our tale, as a whole, did not come from the east, it seems possible that this particular incident may have done so.²

Yet in so far as the tournament form is concerned, it is, of course, *possible* that certain literary versions of the story might have been affected by the ordinary customs of the day. Anyway there seems to be a fairly close correspondence here between fact and fancy. Niedner, in his work on *Das Deutsche Turnier*,³ remarks that the tourney proper was generally held on a Monday; the knights assembled on the previous Saturday; Sunday morning was spent in mustering those present and arranging the opposing factions; while the afternoon was devoted to the encounter known as the *Vesper-spiel*, preliminary to the grand struggle of the morrow. Thus the ordinary duration of such a meeting might be reckoned as three days.

But it is clear that there might also be three distinct encounters on as many separate days, as in the folk-tale. Professor Kittredge, in his article, 'Who was Sir Thomas Malory?'⁴ notes a very remarkable and pertinent instance taken from the life of Richard Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick. When that nobleman was Governor of Calais, hearing of a great gathering

¹ 'The Black Horse,' *More Celtic Fairy Tales*, p. 226.

² Mr. Hartland also draws attention to the parallel between the three disguises of the hero and the three dresses of the heroine in certain variants of the *Cinderella* story. In the *Aschenbrödel* the robes are woven of sun, moon, and stars.

³ Berlin, 1881.

Harvard Studies and Notes, vol. v. pp. 94, 95.

of knights, to be held in the neighbourhood, 'he cast in his mynde to do sume newe poynt of chevalry'; and under the several names of *The Grene Knight*, *Chevalier Vert*, and *Chevalier Attendant*, sent three challenges to the French king's court. These being accepted, he appeared the first two days in differing armour, the third 'in face opyn,' on each occasion overthrowing his antagonist.¹ The days in question are given by Rous as January 6th, 7th, and 8th; the year he does not mention; but Professor Kittredge, by a process of elimination, arrives at the conclusion that it must have been either 1416 or 1417. It is, of course, obvious that this feat must have been suggested by the romances. It is, I think, equally obvious that the three days of the romances were not at variance with actual practice. As to the version of the folk-tale there can be no question. The correct number is three—neither more nor less.

It is, of course, also clear that the occurrence of the tournament in the folk-tale must be subsequent to the institution of tournaments as part of the ordinary chivalric and social conditions; but the tale itself must be earlier, as is witnessed both by the archaic nature of the rescue incident and the magical nature of the horses. Trials of skill in horsemanship are known to all stages of society; and the original form of this special incident was doubtless something of this kind. In the Odenwald variant referred to above, the hero has to perform the feat of carrying off on his spear a ring suspended from a beam, and to hang it up again in returning. This is here supposed to form part of the tournament; but it seems most likely

¹ John Rous, *Life of Richard, Earl of Warwick*.

that in earlier forms the trial of skill by which the hero was tested and identified was simply some such feat of skilled horsemanship.

Nor do I think that we are to see the influence of romance, rather than of custom, in this transformation. Neither of the poems in which the incident approximates most closely to the folk-tale form, the *Lanzelet* and the *Ipomedon*, appear to have been particularly popular (certainly not the former), judging from the number of manuscripts in which they have been preserved, while the 'Tournament' form of the folk-tale is found all over Europe. It is much more reasonable, surely, to conclude that the episode has been borrowed, as so many others have been borrowed, from the stores of popular tradition than to hold that in this case popular tradition has been modified by the influences of a literary cycle.

But is it not as clear as daylight that all this immense body of evidence absolutely and finally disposes of any claim on the part of Chrétien to be first in the field? The *four* days of *Cligés* rule that romance, as a source, out of court at once and for ever. Further, not only is that version demonstrably secondary in itself, but definitely secondary to and dependent upon the *Lancelot* versions. These correspond with the prevailing colours of the folk-tale—black, red, and white, or green, red, and white.¹ The

¹ I should like to draw the attention of readers to the fact that these two 'triplets' of colours are also to be met with elsewhere. Thus black, white, and red are found, as we have seen, in a famous incident of the *Perceval*; and that curious book, *Durandus on Symbolism*, gives them as the colours of the three veils covering the altar at Passiontide. White, green, and red are found in the legend of the Tree of Life, and Solomon's Ship, preserved in the *Queste* and *Grand Saint Graal*. A friend, learned

one is the version of the *Prose Lancelot*, the other of the *Lanzelet*. Chrétien not only gives one day too many, but manifestly does so in order to combine the two versions which he, in common with us, knew, and gives *both* green and black—two colours which are found together in no single version of all the dozens I have read.

There is a possible 'clerical' explanation of the existence of two versions of the *Lancelot* tale. *Noir* in the manuscript may have been read *vair*, and a copyist writing from oral dictation may thus have substituted *vert*. But in the face of the green, red, and white of the very primitive Celtic variant given by Mr. Campbell, and confirmed by the Greek parallel, I think it more likely that the three colours of the *Lanzelet* represent the older form. But inasmuch as in romances, which, like the Arthurian, were supposed to correspond in some measure to the conditions of real life, a green *horse* would be an impossibility, while yet horse and armour should correspond, black—perhaps under the influence of the *Perceval* story—would take its place. Both were represented in the folk-tale, and it may be that the version of the *Prose Lancelot* and of the *Ipomedon* simply represents 'the survival of the fittest.'

That there were *two* versions a closer study will, I think, make evident. Probably those who have followed the argument and illustrations closely will have already detected what hitherto I have left un-

in such matters, has informed me that these sets of colours represent certain alchemical processes, and in that connection were well known in mediæval times. It seems possible that there may have been some hidden and mystical significance attached to their earliest use; we have not fathomed all the secrets of folk-lore.

noted, that the version of the *Ipomedon* stands in a much closer relation with certain forms of the folk-tale, *i.e.* the *Petit Berger* or a group, than is the case with either the *Cligés* or the two *Lancelot* versions. In the *Ipomedon* alone the prize of the Three Days' Tournament is the hand of the princess. And not only is there agreement in this, the leading, feature, but there is also a curious correspondence in minor details. Thus, both in the poem and in the folk-tale, the hero, in the character of a servant, has already won the princess's love. In both she is bitterly disappointed at his apparent failure to compete. In the folk-tale she sends each evening to ask why the shepherd-lad has taken no part in the tourney, receiving each time the answer that he was unwell, but would do his best to appear on the morrow. In the poem, each evening *Ipomedon* sends word to the princess that it is he who has gained the tourney, but that he is leaving the country immediately, and will not be present on the next day. Thus the heroine, in each case, is kept in uncertainty as to the intentions of her lover.

If we add to this the correspondence with the Odenwald variant already pointed out,¹ and the fact that in the *Ipomedon* alone the hero is wounded on the third day—a feature found not only in the Odenwald story but in several variants of *Le Prince et son Cheval*—it becomes clear that if there be a doubt as to the source of the *Cligés* or the *Lanzelet*, the *Ipomedon* version must repose, directly or indirectly, upon the folk-tale.

But, as we have seen, it is precisely the evidence of

¹ P. 25.

the *Ipomedon* which leads us to connect the story with Walter Map, and the romance ascribed to him, the *Lancelot*. What, then, are we to conclude? I think the only satisfactory interpretation is that which I have suggested above, that there were two versions of the story; in one of which the hero was represented as winning, and probably wedding, the princess; in the other the incident, whatever its original form, had already been so far modified as simply to provide an effective setting for his first appearance at Arthur's court. This is indeed what we find in the *Lanzelet*; and the general tone of that poem, wherein the hero wins the hand of no fewer than four ladies, and certainly weds three of them, shows that there would be no initial improbability in postulating another and more primitive form of the story.

To return to *Cligés*. The *dramatis personæ* of the tournament episode should be considered. The hero of the adventure does not compete with any number of knights, but is each day confronted with a chosen champion. These are, as I have already shown, Segramor, Lancelot, Perceval, and Gawain; and so far as the first three are concerned they appear here, and here only, their names, even, being otherwise unmentioned throughout the six thousand seven hundred and eighty lines of the poem.

To any one thoroughly familiar with the Arthurian romances, the juxtaposition of these three names is extremely significant. The adventure itself is elsewhere assigned to Lancelot. The hero with whom the *Lancelot* story in its earlier stages is most closely associated is Perceval; Chrétien himself here introduces Perceval as a famous knight, with whose renown

Cligés was already familiar, and ranks him above Lancelot. One of the best-known adventures ascribed to Perceval is, as we have already shown, one in which the three colours, black, red, and white, figure, and in which he overthrows Kay in a manner curiously akin to other versions of the tournament episode. But previous to overthrowing Kay he had vanquished Segramor, who was the first to attack him. Is it not evident that Chrétien, like the authors of the *Ipomedon* and the original *Lanzelet*, was here reminded of the blood-drops adventure? If it be asked why introduce Segramor instead of Kay, we may recall the fact that while Cligés is represented as nephew to the Emperor of Constantinople, Segramor, as the *Merlin* tells us, was son to that potentate. Chrétien *may* have introduced him as less known in connection with this than Kay, who is never once named in *Cligés*; but I think it more likely that it was his parallelism to the hero, as well as his connection with Perceval, which determined his appearance.

But with regard to the latter, there is another point which deserves mention. In that section of the *Peredur* which does not correspond to any section of the *Conte del Graal* we find the hero, released from prison by the daughter of his jailer, attending a warlike tournament, in which each day he carries off the prizes; but there is no change of armour, and the days appear to be four instead of three. Previously to this he has also appeared three successive days at a tournament; but overcome by the beauty of the empress, of whom he is enamoured, he remains gazing at her, instead of taking part in the contest, until the third and final day. These passages are deserving of note, as they appear

to me to show direct contact between the *Perceval* and *Lancelot* stories, and in this instance the borrowing appears to be on the part of the earlier story. Not only is Lancelot released from the prison of the Lady of Malehault to attend a tournament, thus corresponding with the one instance, but when he arrives on the spot he behaves in precisely the same manner at the sight of Guinevere as is recorded of Peredur with the empress. I do not feel able to accept the tournament as a real part of the *Perceval* story, no other feature of any version of the *Perceval* 'Enfances' corresponding with the *formulæ* of the group in question; yet the correspondence of detail between the two stories is so undeniable that contact of some sort, direct or indirect, there must be, and I think in this case we must hold that the *Peredur* has been influenced by a version of the *Lancelot* akin to that preserved in the prose redaction.

To return to *Cligés*. Taking into consideration all the evidence, the importance and widespread character of the folk-tale, the closer correspondence of both the *Ipomedon* and the *Lanzelet* to the popular form, and the peculiarities of the *Cligés* version, it becomes, I think, impossible to doubt that this latter, so far from being the *source* of the *Lanzelet*, is, as submitted above, not merely posterior to, but distinctly dependent upon a form of that story. And if we admit this, must we not also admit that here, at least, Chrétien did *not* understand the character of the material with which he was dealing, and that in this instance he certainly deserves the epithet which Professor Foerster asserts we would wish to apply to him, that of *ein verschlechtern-der Uebearbeiter*? The phrase, be it remembered, is

Professor Foerster's, and not mine ; but so admirably does it suit the present question, that I can only say, '*I thank thee, friend, for teaching me this word!*' Chrétien was *not* dealing directly with popular tradition, but taking it at second-hand after it had already been modified and worked over in romantic form. To put it tersely, in the Three Days' Tournament we have a folk-tale theme intelligently adapted by the authors of the *Ipomedon* and the *Lanzelet*, and misunderstood and 'muddled' by Chrétien.

But the interesting problems connected with this episode are not all solved when we have determined the ultimate source of the story, and the position to be assigned to Chrétien's version. As we have seen, there is strong ground for believing that the French poet knew two versions of the *Lancelot* story ; is it not possible that one of these versions may have been the lost French source of the *Lanzelet*? The 'setting' of the *Cligés* tournament, in which the hero makes his first appearance at Arthur's court, corresponds with that of the *Lanzelet* ; and, as we have remarked above, in the *Erec* we find not only the name of Lancelot, but also that of the enchanter Mauduiz, who appears nowhere save in U. von Zatzikhoven's poem. Professor Foerster's opinion is that we must consider the German *Lanzelet* as '*die möglichst getreue Wiedergabe eines französischen Originals*'; and on this point at least, I, for one, am quite prepared to agree with him. Whether, after a real study of that poem (with which I strongly suspect he had only a superficial familiarity), the learned professor will desire to maintain his opinion is another question ! But, granting that the German version correctly reproduces the

French original, the nature of the work—a loosely connected collection of independent tales, of marked folk-lore character—points to a period of evolution anterior to Chrétien's well-knit and elaborately polished literary productions.

Then, again, there arises the question, Granting the existence of a *Lancelot* romance previous to Chrétien, could Walter Map have been the author? On this point it is not easy, with the material at our disposal, to express a decided opinion. Map and Chrétien were certainly contemporaries, but in neither case do we know the date of birth. Map died in 1209, therefore we may suppose he was not born long before 1140; a later date is scarcely probable, as he was a student at Paris in 1154, and at the court of Henry II. before 1162.¹ We do not know when Chrétien wrote the *Erec*, but it was almost certainly some time in the decade 1150-60. That Map should have been the author of a *Lancelot* poem earlier than the *Erec* is quite possible, but, perhaps, not very probable; but there would have been ample time for him to write one before the *Cligés*. Thus, while I think it highly probable that Chrétien borrowed from Map in the latter poem, I would reserve my opinion as to the former. Of the probable character of such a work we can gather some idea from Map's undoubted literary remains; *De Nugis Curialium* offers abundant proof of the writer's taste for popular tales and traditions. Had he lived in the nineteenth-twentieth centuries, instead of the twelfth-thirteenth, Map would undoubtedly have been a prominent member of the Folk-Lore

¹ For details of Map's life, cf. *Dictionary of National Biography*, and the Introduction to Wright's edition of *De Nugis Curialium*.

Society.¹ His *Lancelot* poem might have been a short episodic romance of folk-tale character, a Three Days' Tournament story, or it might have been a collection of such episodes, like the *Lanzelet*, i.e. its character would probably be *popular* rather than *literary*. I should myself have felt inclined to decide for the *Lanzelet* source, were it not for the evidence of the *Ipomedon*, which appears to presuppose a version closer to the original folk-tale.

Another point to be borne in mind in connection with the *Cligés*, and one to which I have already drawn attention,² is the peculiar geography of the poem, which is distinctly Anglo-Norman rather than Arthurian; the tale is obviously composed of originally independent themes; and whatever may have been contained in the book of the Beauvais Library, I think it is at the least possible that part of Chretien's material came to him from insular sources.

As regards the *Lanzelet*, we know that the source of that poem came from England, and elsewhere³ I have pointed out that a curious allusion to England (*not* as is more usual to *Britain*) seems to make it probable that the French original was written in this island. If we couple with this the authorship and evidence

¹ I would draw the attention of students of the *Lais* of Marie de France to the fact that Map gives several versions of the wedding of a knight with a fairy, or Otherworld, mistress. Also a version of a visit to the Otherworld kingdom with an ending closely corresponding with that of the *Voyage of Bran*, and *Guingamor*, and in each case he locates the story in Wales. It is perfectly clear that tales, such as we find in the *Lais*, were at least as well known in these islands as on the Continent.

² *Legend of Sir Lancelot*, p. 83.

³ *Legend of Sir Lancelot*, p. 111. The folk-lore allusions in the *Lanzelet* are worth following up.

of the *Ipomedon*, and the persistent attribution of a *Lancelot* romance to Walter Map, we have, I think, a strong presumption in favour of an early *insular* version of that story.

While this study was in the printer's hands I came across the following allusion to the slaying of a dragon by Lancelot; it occurs in the Auchinleck Manuscript version of *Sir Bevis of Hampton* (Cxxx):—

‘ After Josianis cristing
Beves dede a gret fighting—
Swich bataile ded never non
Cristene man of flesch and bon—
Of a dragoun thar beside,
That Beves slough ther in that tide;
Save Sire Lancelot de Lake
He faught with a furdrake [fiery dragon],
And Wade dede also
And never knightes boute thai to.’¹

This allusion is the more interesting as, saving in the case of *Morien*, to which I have already referred, I have nowhere found this special feat attributed to Lancelot; certainly it does not occur in the whole extent of the *Prose Lancelot*, nor is it ever alluded to in that romance. Yet, if my theory of the evolution of the Lancelot legend be correct, such a combat ought certainly, at one time, to have formed part of his story. The evidence of this Anglo-Norman romance, supported as it is by the independent testimony of *Morien*, is therefore especially welcome; I am inclined to think that it strongly increases the probability of a definitely *insular* version of the story,

¹ I am indebted to Mr. W. B. Laikie for kindly verifying the quotation for me.

differing in some respects from the *continental*, having existed at the time the '*Sir Bevis*' was written.

Nor would the existence of such a version be, as Professor Foerster asserts, incompatible with the continental *origin* of the character;¹ to assert as much is really to stultify his own arguments. Does not the whole system of Professor Foerster rest upon the hypothesis that the character of Arthur, indisputably of insular *origin*, underwent development upon continental ground? The fact that what he roundly denies of Arthur he asserts emphatically as natural for Lancelot throws a flood of light upon the *ex parte* character of this distinguished scholar's methods!

If we take into consideration the character of the elements composing the early *Lancelot* story, a character which, be it remembered, is not a question of suggestion but a matter of proof, we shall become clearly aware that the material for development existed on both sides of the Channel. I believe myself that Lancelot was of continental origin, but I recognise clearly that if the source and development of his story were such as I suppose them to have been, that continental origin was a matter of accident, not of necessity; and if some other scholar should bring forward arguments to prove that the story had its rise on insular rather than on continental ground, I shall be quite prepared to reconsider the question.

So far as the evidence I have now collected is concerned, it looks as if the development of the early *Lancelot* story might thus be sketched:—

- a. *Lai* (presumably Breton), relating theft of king's son by water-fairy, amplified by

¹ Cf. *Charrette*, p. lxxvii.

- b.* Bringing up of youth in Otherworld kingdom, peopled by women only (source, general Celtic tradition, possibly *Gawain* legend).
- c.* His entry into the world (*Perceval* legend).
- d.* Introduction of adventures of *Sea Maiden* story, *a* being the point of contact, and suggesting the development, which may have been as follows:—
 - d^a.* Winning of magic steeds and armour.
 - d^b.* { Rescue of princess from monster, and
 False Claimant story; or
 - d^c.* { Rescue of princess from Otherworld. As
 we have seen (p. 25), it would be quite
 possible for these to be combined.
 - d^d.* Appearance at Three Days' Tournament.

It would seem not improbable that it was the independent existence of incident *d^c* in the popular tale that led to its coalescing with the Arthurian legend. As I have elsewhere pointed out,¹ the character of the Guinevere abduction story is in itself so primitive that it may well have formed part of the earliest stratum of Arthurian tradition. The variants are of such a nature as to indicate that they arose at a period when the real meaning of the story was still understood, and carefully retained. The tale must therefore be far older than any extant *literary* version.

If we admit the suggested hypothesis—that the hero of the Lancelot *lai* became through the 'mermaid' incident identified with the hero of the *Sea Maiden* story—the character of that story, and the immense popularity to which its wide diffusion testifies, would give us a solid working hypothesis to account for the

¹ *Legend of Sir Lancelot*, p. 46 *et seq.*

choice of Lancelot as Guinevere's lover. The similarity of the stories led to his identification with her rescuer, and that step once taken the recognition of him as her lover was—given the social conditions of the time and the popularity of the *Tristan* story—a foregone conclusion.¹

But this evolution, so far as we can tell, took place on *both* sides of the Channel. Thus, while I have found no single *insular* version which gives the Tournament episode, I have equally found no *continental* variant which contains the mermaid. Yet it is the latter (mermaid) which appears to form the point of contact between the folk-tale and the *lai*, while it is the persistent recurrence of the former (the Tournament) which has given us the key to disentangle the complicated evolution of the story.

Here is a point on which I should wish to make my position perfectly clear. I do not think that Lancelot was *ab origine* the hero of a variant of this popular and

¹ The theory which I advanced in chap. vii. of the *Legend of Sir Lancelot* with regard to the temporary disappearance of the tradition of Guinevere's infidelity is, I think, strengthened by the evidence of the various 'chastity-test' *Lais*, Horn, Mantle, Glove. We might reasonably expect Guinevere to come but poorly out of such an ordeal; as a rule, however, she escapes very easily, far more easily, indeed, than the majority of the ladies of the court. In one case we are clearly given to understand that her sole error, a trivial one, has been one of thought. Now the *lais* represent, as is generally admitted, an early stage of romantic evolution, and taken into consideration with the evidence of the earlier poems, they certainly appear to strengthen the argument tentatively put forward in my *Lancelot*, e.g. that the tradition of the queen's faithlessness to her husband belonged to the *historic* legend and was, as such, preserved in the pseudo-chronicles; it had no existence in the *romantic* legend till introduced under the influence of a special social condition, and in this its later form, it is not to be regarded as a survival of the historic Modred story, but as a later and independent development.

widely-spread folk-tale. The persistent element in the *Lancelot* story is, as I have elsewhere shown, his connection with the beneficent Lady of the Lake. Now the maiden of the folk-tale is a sea, not a lake, maiden, and is, further, consistently represented as of a malicious, rather than a kindly, character. True, she aids the fisher in the first instance, but she belongs to that order of beings whose gifts, apparently desirable, are saddled with conditions which turn to the undoing, rather than to the profit of the receiver. Also, her presence in the story is restricted to a small and well-marked group of variants, which apparently preserve a primitive type of the story, and are never combined with the Tournament, which recurs so frequently in the *Lancelot* romances.

Again this folk-tale, *quâ* folk-tale, does not belong to the same group as that which offers parallels to the *Perceval* story; yet the *Lancelot* story was certainly affected, and that at an early stage of development, by the *Perceval*. Folk-lore students are well aware of the facility with which one story-type can become contaminated by another originally distinct from it; and while I see in the common 'folk-tale' origin of the two legends a satisfactory explanation of the undeniable influence traceable through all the earlier stages of the *Lancelot* evolution, I would yet distinguish sharply between the two heroes. *Perceval* is a British (insular) Celt; *Lancelot* a continental (Breton) Celt, the development of whose story is posterior to that of the insular hero. For all these reasons I think it most probable that *Lancelot* was the hero of an independent, and originally short, tale, which by an accidental similarity of incident became

connected with one of the most popular of known folk-tales, from which it freely borrowed adventures, and which, through the medium of one of these adventures, became later incorporated with the Arthurian tradition and developed upon romantic lines.

The whole character of the earlier *Lancelot* story is strongly reminiscent of a *lai*, and I see no reason to depart from the opinion expressed in my *Lancelot* 'Studies,' that the root of the whole wonderful growth is to be sought in such a *lai*.

Nor do I see reason to doubt that this *lai* may have been of continental origin, and at the same time have taken this most important step in development upon insular ground. I cannot agree with those scholars who appear to regard the Channel as an impassable barrier to communication previous to the date of Chrétien de Troyes, and the most facile medium of intercourse immediately after that date!

For more than a century previous, *i.e.* from the days of Edward the Confessor, intercourse between the English court and the north of France had been frequent and continuous; for nearly a century the kings of England had also been princes of France. When, therefore, we find, as we do, that the materials for the development of a story existed on both sides of the Channel, and that the story, in its completed form, is akin to both continental and insular variants, forming, as it were, a link between the two, and combining forms which are not known to meet elsewhere, the conclusion that the process of evolution was not confined to one country appears neither illogical nor unfounded.

I would, therefore, now suggest that we have solid

grounds for supposing that the story of Lancelot, starting as a Breton *lai*, and brought in that form to England, became in these islands connected with a special variant of a very widely diffused folk-tale. Having borrowed from this tale certain adventures, it found its way back, in this enlarged form, to the Continent, where the story from which it had borrowed being equally well known, it underwent further development on the same lines. I suspect that here the flying horses of the Celtic tale became transformed into the normal steeds of the Three Days' Tournament, though the colour of the armour—green, red, and white—was at first retained.

But on which side of the Channel was the final and most important step, the incorporation with the Arthurian cycle, taken? Of the various versions of Guinevere's abduction, the Melwas story exists only in an insular text, the *Vita Gildæ*, and this is apparently connected with a partly lost and entirely confused Welsh tradition. The Meleagant version is by locality directly connected with Melwas; and the only extant version of the Falerîn abduction tale came from England. I submit that here again we have reasonable ground for the hypothesis that the identification of Lancelot as Guinevere's rescuer, and subsequently as her lover, may be due to insular rather than continental development. The question is, as will be seen, by no means an easy one, and I should prefer to express no definite opinion as to the real bearing of the evidence here adduced. There are, as I have shown, indications pointing in opposite directions. The precise value and relation of these indications will be better realised as we become more familiar with what is at pre-

sent a somewhat novel interpretation of the facts. In any case it will be seen that the theory here advanced only affects the earlier stages of the *Lancelot* story, leaving untouched the question of its development as part of the Arthurian romantic cycle. It affords us a working hypothesis which may enable us to bridge the gulf between Lancelot the independent hero (*Lanzelet*) and Lancelot the queen's lover (*Charrette*), a gulf which has hitherto presented a problem baffling to the Arthurian student.

But is it not also apparent that, in the light of the evidence here collected, the theory of an Anglo-Norman Arthurian tradition, independent of, and anterior to, Chrétien's poems should no longer be contemptuously derided? Whatever may be the eventual verdict on the evolution of the *Lancelot* story, the examination of the various romantic versions of the Tournament story, in the light of folk-lore evidence, has, I think, made absolutely clear to any unprejudiced critic that the *Cligés* version cannot possibly be the source of either the *Lanzelet* or the *Ipomedon*, but represents a version further removed from the original form, and in all probability dependent upon some variant, or variants, of the *Lancelot*. And if this be the case in one poem, and that the very poem in which the admirers of Chrétien assert roundly that his independence is most clearly shown, are we not justified in our hesitation as regards his other works?

In my *Lancelot* 'Studies' I showed that Professor Foerster's theory as to the origin of the *Yvain* would not bear the test of strict examination; that evidence, both internal and external, could be adduced in favour

of the view that the tale was but a collection of *lais*, put together and worked over by others before Chrétien gave the final touch which converted them into a literary whole. Before long I hope to show, what I have recently recognised as a fact capable of demonstration, that the *Perceval* '*Enfances*,' so far from being the source of the other versions, is but an incomplete and inferior version of a story, which in its original and perfect form no longer exists, but is better preserved elsewhere. *Erec*, so far, I have not examined, but I have little doubt that the result of careful investigation will here be the same; certain it is that the initial adventure, the chase of a fairy stag, represents a superstition alive in these islands to this day. The trackers on Dartmoor claim to be able to distinguish the 'slot' of the fairy deer from among all others, and will solemnly warn the huntsmen of the futility of following such a trail.

Those of us, and they are many, who entertain a profound respect, not merely for M. Gaston Paris' learning, but also for his keen critical instinct, and what I can best express as 'sense of atmosphere,' have hesitated, even though little evidence appeared to be forthcoming, to dismiss lightly, not to say discourteously, a theory which had the support of his authority; the foregoing pages will, I hope, show grounds for believing that an investigation, conducted perhaps on somewhat different lines to those hitherto in favour, will fully justify this hesitation.

We are only on the threshold of Arthurian criticism, and till we have thoroughly familiarised ourselves with the elementary conditions of the problem before us, it is both premature and unscientific to expect to

obtain in any section of this wide field a result which can be claimed as permanent. Thoroughness is an admirable quality; but the thoroughness which consists in carefully and microscopically surveying a single part, before we have ascertained the relation of that part to the whole, is only too apt to result in throwing that whole hopelessly out of focus. The time has not yet come when a final study of any part of the Arthurian legend, based upon a comparison of all the texts, is possible or indeed desirable. The different threads that form the shifting pattern of the fabric are so interwoven that no one can as yet be disentangled *beyond a certain point* without injury to the whole.

Thus neither the *Gawain*, the *Perceval*, nor the *Lancelot* stories can at the present moment receive satisfactory and *final* treatment. In the advanced stages of Arthurian legendary development these three main lines of tradition have become so entangled, have crossed and complicated each other to such an extent, that it is only by following what we may call a parallel method of study that we can hope to determine their exact relationship to each other; while until that exact relationship be accurately determined, a scientific study of the cycle, as a whole, is impossible. There appear to me to be three possible lines of investigation, any one of which will probably throw light on the other two; while the results to be obtained from all three would go far towards providing a sound and scientific basis for future inquiries. These three are (a) The various versions of the Gawain Grail quest; absolutely necessary if we desire to understand the development of the Grail section of the cycle.

(b) The *Perceval* continuations ; which contain sections belonging to early and non-cyclic versions of the stories affected, combined with sections drawn from later and cyclic redactions. These texts will also throw light upon the small and interesting cycle of the *Bel Inconnu*, which is connected with all the three lines of tradition, and is important for all. (c) A comparative study of the various *Lancelot* versions, which will enable us to disentangle the earlier *Perceval-Lancelot* redactions from the later *Galahad* development.

But in this investigation there are certain principles which must be kept clearly in view. We must remember that a cycle like the Arthurian cycle, compounded largely of what we may call mythical and imaginative elements, and largely devoid of historical basis, cannot be examined and criticised on the same principles and by the same methods as can the Charlemagne cycle, where historic conditions, though modified for romantic purposes, have controlled and shaped the process of development.¹

In this latter case an appeal to documentary evidence, and a criticism conducted largely on literary lines, is, by nature of the material to be dealt with, entirely in its place ; in the former, inasmuch as the material of which it is composed belongs far less to history than to that indefinable body we call popular tradition, which never finds more than partial expression in literature, and yet maintains its character practically unchanged throughout the centuries, we must follow a different method.

¹ Cf. *Popular Studies*, No. 10 (Nutt), *The Romance Cycle of Charlemagne and his Peers*, where I have pointed out the fundamental differences between the cycles.

Not that the historic element is to be neglected ; far from it. On the contrary, I would urge that greater attention be bestowed on certain historic factors than has hitherto been the case. The Arthurian romances do not, as do the Charlemagne, reflect more or less correctly certain facts, or periods of history, but the circumstances and surroundings of their origin may nevertheless have been more or less determined by historic conditions, *i.e.* the influence exercised by the court and policy of Henry II.

We are perfectly well aware that a feature of that monarch's domestic policy was his desire to conciliate the Welsh by a clever use of their popular traditions. The alleged discovery of King Arthur's tomb at Glastonbury was, as most historians now recognise, merely an ingenious move in the political game. To what extent he carried his encouragement and adoption of Arthurian tradition we have perhaps hardly yet realised. The fact that it was possible to publish in 1167 a correspondence purporting to be between the King and Arthur in Avalon shows that if Henry did not directly encourage the forgery, he at least saw no ground for discouraging it, and was willing to play into the hands of any one furthering this special line of conciliation. We know, as a matter of literary evidence, that the manuscripts of a very large section of Arthurian prose romance attribute their composition to the direct command of the king ; but so far we have not attempted to ascertain the precise value to be placed on this recurring testimony. I believe myself that a careful investigation into the literary patronage exercised by Henry, and his interest in Arthurian traditions, would yield results

somewhat disconcerting to the adherents of the Continental School.

Of the value of folk-lore and folk-tale as witnesses in the case of a group of stories based largely upon popular tradition, and in their earlier stages of evolution the property of popular story-tellers, we are only slowly becoming aware. But the study of story-transmission has in these last years made immense strides, and may now claim to be fairly based upon sound scientific principles. The extent to which such a study, accurately and carefully carried on, may reflect light upon allied subjects, such as the Arthurian cycle, has yet to be realised. It may be hoped that these pages will lend encouragement to the following up of this special line of investigation.

But there is a danger in our path. Admiration for the learning and indefatigable industry of German scholars has, I fear, caused too many of us to erect into a fetich the result of their labours, and to hold ourselves thereby absolved from the toil of first-hand investigation. This is to render no true service to the cause of scholarship; no one man, no group of men, may claim to be infallible. The result of recent investigation into the value and correctness of Dr. Sommer's *Studies on the Sources of Malory*,¹ a book which for ten years past has been unhesitatingly accepted in scholarly circles as a reliable authority, should be an object lesson to all of us in the necessity of caution, and the individual responsibility which rests upon each to ascertain independently, so far as it be possible, the correctness and solidity of the

¹ On this point, cf. Mr. Greg's review of my *Lancelot* studies, *Folk-Lore*, December 1901.

ground upon which we found our arguments and our conclusions.

Careful and systematic work, with, from time to time, the revision and comparison of results, only to be attained by publication, will, I believe, before very long, enable us to place the criticism of the Arthurian cycle upon a really satisfactory basis. At present it is vain to hope that any one of us can produce, in this particular line of literary investigation, a *magnum opus* that shall be beyond the necessity of revision, and sealed with the stamp of permanent and enduring value.





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